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Rebecca Langlands, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 408. ISBN 0-521-85943-3. \$99.00.

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In this book, Rebecca Langlands (henceforth L.) studies the Roman concept of *pudicitia* in the literary sources dating from the second century BC to the second century AD. She wants to explore the term, reveal its nuances and ramifications, and thereby cast light on how Romans thought about sex and morality in general. Yet the emphasis of the book lies on *pudicitia*: what did it represent in Roman society? What role did it play in the public domain? What did it mean for authors such as Livy, Valerius Maximus, or Plautus? What was its function in oratory? To some extent, therefore, the generalizing title of the book is misleading. L.'s aim to answer some general questions remains partly unfulfilled. She rarely abandons the concept of *pudicitia* and her main general conclusion seems to be that her argument provides a challenge to the currently accepted model of Roman sexuality in terms of penetration and binary opposites (p. 365). Although this challenge is justified, L.'s study is perhaps not the right starting point for a reader who is looking for a general introduction to sexual morality in ancient Rome. This observation, however, does not diminish the value of the book. A recent tendency in modern research is to consider literary descriptions of ancient men and women not as accurate reproductions of historical reality but rather as products of a creative and literary process. Scholars have acknowledged that literary descriptions are embedded in, among other things, an author's political opinion and the contemporary moral culture. Since the importance of virtues in Roman culture has long been established, a study of the various elements of the corpus of virtues is a necessary starting-point for research on Roman sexuality. L. has outstandingly noted this lacuna in modern research.

In the introductory remarks (pp. 1-36), L. discusses how the term *pudicitia* has been used in modern research. She concludes that the term is interpreted with a wide semantic range, already indicating the difficulties inherent in any attempt to understand the concept in Roman terms. L. distinguishes *pudicitia* from other terms pertaining to moral behaviour in Rome (such as *castitas*, *pudor*, *verecundia*, and *modestia*) and defines the special position *pudicitia* takes in regard to these qualities.

Chapter 1 ('Sexual virtue on display I: the cults of *pudicitia* and honours for women', pp. 37-77) treats the role of *pudicitia* in the public domain. As a counterpart to Chapter 6, this chapter concentrates on the attribution of *pudicitia* to women, whereas the latter chapter focuses on the relation between the virtue and men. L. explores the cultivation of *pudicitia* as a personified abstract virtue: a goddess associated with

married women. By examining literary references, she tries to reconstruct the cult and deals with the associated themes and the narratives that emerge from the sources mentioning religious practices regarding Pudicitia (pp. 39-61). She also approaches *pudicitia* as a personal quality that needed to be displayed to and seen by others (pp. 61-77). The importance of displaying *pudicitia* is apparent from the sources, but how did a Roman know that a woman was *pudica*? L. concludes that the sources remain coy and oblique on the question of what *pudicitia* looked like.

In Chapter 2 ('Traditional narratives and Livy's Roman history', pp. 78-122), L. explores the meaning of *pudicitia* in Livy through the legends of Lucretia, Verginia, the centurion and the chieftain's wife, and the Bacchanalian scandal. Lucretia, often considered the paradigm of *pudicitia* par excellence, receives most attention. In this context, L. concentrates on different Livian themes, such as the split between body and soul, the association between *pudicitia* and the freedom of the people, the dangers of avarice and lust, and status boundaries. This chapter consists, above all, of a closer reading and literary analysis of a few Livian passages. Although L. indicates that Livy's interests may reflect the dominant Roman ideology in the Augustan period, she does not elaborate upon the historical context of the *Ab Urbe condita*. This would have contributed to a better understanding of Livy's use of the concept of *pudicitia*.

Chapter 3 ('Valerius Maximus: the complexities of past as paradigm', pp. 123-191), which is the longest and most complicated of the book, concerns Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. The main focus lies on his chapter on *pudicitia*. L. starts her discussion by looking at its context within the work as a whole and at its relation to Valerius Maximus' view of the era of the *maiores*. This he considered to have been a golden age since the power of virtues was so great that there was no need for further restrictions. After an extensive analysis of Valerius' examples of *pudicus* behaviour, L. concludes that the examples often contain lessons about paternal authority. The Roman author emphasizes the importance of the protection of vulnerable bodies by the strongest members of society. Remarkably, many of the examples contain references to violent reactions to violations of *pudicitia*. Because of this and because of the moral complexity of the episodes, L. believes that Valerius did not want his audience to imitate the examples, but wanted to incite them to think about the concept of *pudicitia* and its relevance for social structures. Chapter 3, because of its complexity, is probably the most difficult to understand. It clearly shows L.'s familiarity with Valerius' text. She also refers more than once to her unpublished doctoral dissertation on gender and exemplarity in the *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* ('Gender and exemplarity in Valerius Maximus', Diss. Cambridge, 2000), but, since many readers will not have access to it, giving a broader context would often have been useful. Nonetheless, since studies on women in Valerius Maximus are few, this chapter should be valuable to every scholar interested in the subject.

In Chapter 4 ('Subversive genres: testing the limits of pudicitia', pp. 192-246), L. examines, as she calls it, literature for the less-well educated. These literary genres, which in ancient times were often attacked for their corrupting influence, question the moral standards of Rome and bring to attention the ambiguity that surrounds concepts such as *pudicitia*. Writers L. studies include Propertius, Plautus, Phaedrus, Ovid, Petronius, and Apuleius. L. analyzes how these authors tested the limits of *pudicitia*, how they undermined apparent certainties and exposed their problematic aspects.

Chapter 5 ('Declamation: what part of 'no' do you understand?', pp. 247-279), in a way, also treats the limits of *pudicitia*. L. studies the concept as a subject of

declamation. She discusses how declamatory exercises consisted of constructing persuasive arguments around a controversial topic, in this case *pudicitia*, and how these exercises served to prepare young boys for their lives as orators. Through a study of declamatory texts by Seneca, Ps.-Quintilian and Calpurnius, L. explores the pliability of the term.

As mentioned above, chapter 6 ('Sexual virtue on display II: oratory and the speeches of Cicero', pp. 281-318) serves as the counterpart of chapter 1. It explores the result of the declamatory exercises treated in the previous chapter, namely the use of *pudicitia* in political speeches. Through various Ciceronian speeches, L. examines the role of the virtue in the image of a good citizen of Rome. Cicero highlights the importance to a citizen's life of displaying *pudicitia*, and its consequent importance for the well-being of the state. Central in L.'s study are Cicero's invectives against Verres, Clodius, and Antony, and his use of *pudicitia* as a means of characterization. In a concluding remark, L. observes that one should take into account the distinction between moral attitudes expressed in works such as Cicero's and Roman ethics as actually practiced.

Chapter 7 ('Imperial narratives, imperial interventions', pp. 319-363) treats the works of Tacitus and Suetonius. In the first part of the chapter, L. discusses how Tacitus, unlike the authors treated in previous chapters, concentrates not on *pudicitia* but on *impudicitia*. Tacitus' focus is mainly on vices, which he, of course, considers abundantly present in the imperial family. L.'s study of Tacitus' *Germania* makes clear that his use of the concept of *pudicitia* in reference to the Germanic tribes serves to highlight the presence of *impudicitia* in Rome. L. then analyzes various passages of the *Annales* that describe Julio-Claudian women. L. hopes to show that Tacitus wrote these passages with the legend of Lucretia in mind. Yet, although there are similarities between the stories, in some cases they are too superficial to be convincing. In the second part of the chapter, L. studies Suetonius' references to the decline of *pudicitia* under the Julio-Claudians. Suetonius, the author argues, uses the concept to symbolize the moral decline and to discuss the efficiency (or inefficiency) of imperial intervention. L. concludes that authors of the imperial period certainly used some Republican themes, such as the concept of *pudicitia*, but did so in reference to the socio-political changes of their times and as a means of describing the elite resistance to these changes.

In sum, L.'s study is an important contribution to the study of sexual morality in Rome. She has brought to the fore the complex meaning of *pudicitia* and offered a model by which other virtues could be studied. In this way, L. has broadened our view on this virtue, until now often considered characteristically feminine, by explaining how it was also a fundamental aspect of being a good citizen.

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